

Recipe

Turkish Lentil Soup (Mercimek Çorbası)

Complex layers of earth and acid. Ready in 40 mins.

Here are 5 different ways to view the execution of this recipe. Choose the one that fits your cooking style best.

Format 1: The “Mise-en-place” & Execution Flow

Best for: Ensuring you have everything ready before you start the heat.

Mise-en-place:

- **The Base:** 1 cup Red Lentils (rinsed), 1 medium Yellow Onion (diced), 2-3 cloves Garlic (minced).
- **The Veg:** 2-3 Carrots (peeled/chopped), 1 Russet Potato (small dice).
- **The Flavor Bomb:** 2 tbsp Tomato Paste, 1 tsp Cumin, 1/2 tsp Coriander, 2 tsp Aleppo Pepper (or Paprika + pinch Cayenne).
- **Liquids:** 6 cups Vegetable Broth (approx. 1.5 x 32oz cartons).
- **The Finish:** 1 large Lemon (cut into wedges), 5 tbsp Extra Virgin Olive Oil.
- **Side (Shirazi Salad):** 4-5 Persian Cucumbers, 4-5 Tomatoes, 1/2 Red Onion, 1/2 cup Mint, Lime Juice.

Execution:

1. **Sweat (7m):** Heat 2 tbsp oil in a large pot. Sauté onion, garlic, carrots, and potato until softened.
2. **Bloom (2m):** Stir in tomato paste, cumin, coriander, and 1 tsp Aleppo pepper. Toast until fragrant and deep red.
3. **Simmer (20m):** Add broth and lentils. Boil, then simmer low/covered until lentils are soft.
4. **Blend:** Use an immersion blender until smooth and creamy.
5. **The Sizzle:** In a small skillet, heat 3 tbsp oil. Add remaining Aleppo pepper. Cook 1 min until the oil is red and fragrant.
6. **Serve:** Ladle soup, drizzle with the sizzling oil, and serve with a heavy squeeze of lemon.

Format 2: The “Flavor Layers” (Step-by-Step Build)

Best for: Understanding the sequential build-up of flavors.

1. **SWEET & EARTHY Base:** The onions, carrots, and potatoes provide a sweet vegetable foundation, while the red lentils add the earthy protein backbone.
2. **BLOOMED SPICE Layer:** Frying the tomato paste and spices (cumin/coriander) in oil unlocks fat-soluble flavors that boiling water alone cannot release.
3. **CREAMY TEXTURE Layer:** Blending the cooked potato and lentils creates a natural, dairy-free creaminess that coats the palate.
4. **BRIGHT ACID Punch:** The fresh lemon juice squeezed at the end cuts through the starchy thickness, waking up the entire dish.
5. **SPICY FAT Finish:** The chili-infused oil dribbled on top provides heat and a rich mouthfeel contrast to the acidic soup.

Format 3: The “Chef’s Shorthand” (Tactical)

Best for: Quick glances while cooking.

- **Prep** all veg (dice).
- **Sweat** mirepoix in pot (7m).
- **Bloom** tomato paste + spices (2m).
- **Simmer** w/ broth + lentils (20m).
- **Blend** smooth.
- **Sizzle** chili oil in small pan.
- **Assemble:** Soup -> Chili Oil -> Lemon Squeeze.

Format 4: The “Timeline” (Parallel Processor)

Best for: Optimization and multi-tasking.

Time	Action	Notes
T-0:40	Prep	Rinse lentils, dice veg.
T-0:30	Cook Base	Sweat onions/carrots/potatoes.
T-0:23	Spices	Add paste/spices. Bloom.
T-0:21	Simmer	Add broth/lentils. Cover.
T-0:20	Salad	Chop cucumbers/tomatoes (Shirazi).
T-0:05	Finish	Blend soup. Heat chili oil.
T-0:00	Serve	Bowls + Lemon + Salad side.

Format 5: The “Sensory Script” (Audio-Visual)

Best for: Cooking by feel and intuition.

- **SMELL:** The kitchen should smell warm and toasted (cumin) when the spices hit the oil.
- **LOOK:** The soup will transition from chunky/clear broth to a uniform, sunny orange opaque liquid after blending.
- **SOUND:** The quiet bubble of the simmer is replaced by the aggressive “whirrr” of the immersion blender.
- **TOUCH:** The lentils should be completely disintegrated; the potato should be soft enough to mash against the pot wall.
- **TASTE:** Before lemon, it feels heavy and earthy. After lemon, it sings. Adjust salt until the lemon doesn’t taste “sour” but “bright.”

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- **The Catch:** Before blending the soup, fish out several chunks of potato and carrot. Serve these “nuggets” plain with a side of cheese toast or pita bread.